

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing of claims below replaces all prior versions of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended): An oval-spherical organic polymer particle having a single continuous curved surface, which particle is characterized by:

bearing an ionic functional group, and

having an aspect ratio P_1 , calculated by the formula $P_1 = L_1/D_1$, wherein L_1 is the major axis and D_1 is the minor axis of a projected two-dimensional image obtained by shining light onto the particle from a direction orthogonal to the long axis of the particle, that satisfies the relationship $P_1 \geq 1.8$, and

being produced by solution polymerization in water, a water-soluble organic solvent or a mixed solvent of water and a water-soluble organic solvent.

2. (Original): The oval-spherical organic polymer particle of claim 1 which is characterized in that the major axis L_1 is from 0.001 to 10,000 μm .

3. (Original): The oval-spherical organic polymer particle of claim 1 or 2 which is characterized in that the ionic functional group is an anionic functional group.

4. (Original): The oval-spherical organic polymer particle of claim 1 or 2 which is characterized in that the ionic functional group is a salt having a counterion.

5. (Original): The oval-spherical organic polymer particle of claim 3 which is characterized in that the anionic functional group has a metal cation as a counterion.

6. (Original): A method of producing the oval-spherical organic polymer particle of claim 1 or 2, the method being characterized by solution polymerizing a first organic monomer having an ionic functional group and a polymerizable group with a second organic monomer which is polymerizable with the first organic monomer.

7. (Original): The oval-spherical organic polymer particle producing method of claim 6 which is characterized by using a solution having a content of the first and second organic monomers combined of 1 to 80 wt%.

8. (Previously Presented): The oval-spherical organic polymer particle producing method of claim 6 which is characterized by carrying out dispersion polymerization in a solution that also contains a dispersant.

9. (Previously Presented): The oval-spherical organic polymer particle producing method of claim 7 which is characterized by carrying out dispersion polymerization in a solution that also contains a dispersant.

10. (New): An oval-spherical organic polymer particle having a single continuous curved surface, which particle is characterized by:

bearing an ionic functional group, and

having an aspect ratio P_1 , calculated by the formula $P_1 = L_1/D_1$, wherein L_1 is the major axis and D_1 is the minor axis of a projected two-dimensional image obtained by shining light onto the particle from a direction orthogonal to the long axis of the particle, that satisfies the relationship $P_1 \geq 1.8$, and

being produced by solution polymerizing a first organic monomer having an ionic functional group and a polymerizable group with a second organic monomer which is polymerizable with the first organic monomer,

wherein the first organic monomer is at least one selected from the group consisting of salts of styrenesulfonic acids, salts of styrenecarboxylic acids, salts of (meth)acrylic acid, salts of (meth)acrylate carboxylic acids, salts of (meth)acrylate sulfonic acids, salts of vinylsulfonic acids, salts of vinylcarboxylic acids, salts of (meth)acryl sulfonic acids, and salts of (meth)acrylic carboxylic acids, and

the second organic monomer is at least one selected from the group consisting of styrene monomers and (meth)acrylic monomers.

11 (New): The oval-spherical organic polymer particle of claim 10 which is characterized in that the major axis L_1 is from 0.001 to 10,000 μm .

12 (New): The oval-spherical organic polymer particle of claim 10 which is characterized in that the ionic functional group is an anionic functional group.

13 (New): The oval-spherical organic polymer particle of claim 11 which is characterized in that the ionic functional group is a salt having a counterion.

14 (New): The oval-spherical organic polymer particle of claim 11 which is characterized in that the anionic functional group has a metal cation as a counterion.